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Forty-sixth session

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 27 February 1995, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. GARVALOV

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Mr. FALL (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights), congratulating the Committee on its twenty-fifth anniversary, said that, with the recent ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Switzerland and the United State of America, the total number of States parties to the Convention had risen to 143; with the declaration of Finland, 21 States had now made a declaration recognizing the competence of the Committee to receive individual complaints under article 14 of the Convention.

2. Developments since the Committee's previous session included the 5th meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies in September 1994, which had been chaired by the Committee's own Chairman. He drew attention to the recent general discussion by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the role of the family in protecting the rights of the child and to that Committee's request that it might now hold a third session annually on account of its increased workload, the Convention on the Rights of the Child having now been ratified by 170 States. At its autumn 1994 session, the Human Rights Committee had adopted a General Comment on Reservations. At its December session, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had held a general discussion on the right to education in the context of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, proclaimed by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session. The Chairman of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had made an important contribution to that discussion.

3. At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly had again commended the Committee's initiatives on early warning and urgent procedures and had welcomed the contact now established between the Committee and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The General Assembly had further requested the Committee to contribute fully to the implementation of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination and its Programme of Action and urged all those participating in the implementation of the Third Decade to pay particular attention to the situation of indigenous people. The International Decade of the World's Indigenous People had now been formally proclaimed by the General Assembly and the short-term programme of activities adopted. As coordinator of that Decade, he reiterated his invitation to the Committee to submit to him any comments concerning its implementation.

4. In resolution 49/178 on the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, the General Assembly requested the High Commissioner for Human Rights to report regularly to the Commission on Human Rights on possible technical assistance projects identified by the treaty bodies, inviting them to give priority attention to identifying such possibilities in the regular course of their work of reviewing the periodic reports of States parties. They were also invited to bring situations of massive human rights violations to the attention of the High Commissioner, who, in turn, was requested to coordinate and consult throughout the United Nations system. The High Commissioner was further requested to consult

the treaty bodies in relation to his efforts to promote cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations for the promotion and protection of human rights. The General Assembly also endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the 5th meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies, including those relating to the human rights of women and the suggestion that reporting guidelines should be amended to request gender-specific information from States parties.

5. With a view to making the activities of the Centre for Human Rights more efficient and bringing them more closely into line with both the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the mandate of the High Commissioner, proposals for the restructuring of the Centre's programme of work were currently being developed and were expected to be finalized by summer 1995, after appropriate consultations with various interested parties, notably the treaty bodies, whose needs would of course be taken into account.

6. The CHAIRMAN thanked the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights for his important statement and assured him of the Committee's continued close cooperation.

7. Mr. WOLFRUM said that the Assistant Secretary-General's record in taking action to combat all forms of racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance was impressive. Appreciable efforts had also been made by the Centre for Human Rights. The Committee was concerned, however, that, despite the action taken, such phenomena were on the rise, as was evidenced by developments in Europe and elsewhere. The role of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance was therefore of great importance. He drew the attention of the Assistant Secretary-General to the fact that the Committee had so far had no contact at all with the Special Rapporteur, even though, as indicated in paragraph 4 of the report by the Special Rapporteur (E/CN.4/1995/78), the latter had been requested by the Commission on Human Rights to exchange views with the treaty bodies, including the Committee, in order to further enhance their effectiveness and mutual cooperation. He asked the Assistant Secretary-General to exert his best endeavours to facilitate such cooperation, which would be of mutual benefit. The Committee, for its part, was most willing to share its long experience in such matters.

8. Referring to paragraphs 13 to 15 of the same report, he said that the last-minute cancellation of the proposed visit by the Special Rapporteur to the United Kingdom, reportedly because of lack of funds, was highly regrettable, and he requested further explanations. Indeed, it emerged from the report that very few of the Special Rapporteur's planned visits had taken place and he asked whether additional funding could not be made available to enable the Special Rapporteur to fulfil his important mandate more effectively.

9. Mr. van BOVEN said he was gratified to note that the views of the treaty bodies would be taken into account in the current process of reorganizing the Centre for Human Rights. Like Mr. Wolfrum, he regretted the financial constraints preventing the Centre from delivering all the services needed. A particular problem with which the treaty bodies had to contend was the

inadequate provision of relevant information and he asked whether consideration was being given in the restructuring process to the establishment of a resource centre or database within the Centre for use by treaty bodies, as had been suggested by the Committee in the past.

10. Mr. BANTON asked whether the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights was aware that the late cancellation of the planned visit by the Special Rapporteur to the United Kingdom had been damaging to the reputation of the United Nations, as could be seen from press reports.

11. With regard to the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, he was encouraged by the reference made by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights to the General Assembly's request that the Committee should contribute fully to the implementation of the Decade. He asked whether the annual report on the implementation of the Decade requested by the General Assembly had been prepared for the first year of the Decade and whether it would be available to the Committee. He reiterated an earlier suggestion that the bureaux of the Committee and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities might usefully discuss the planning and implementation of the Programme of Action for the Decade at their proposed joint annual meetings, particularly the one scheduled to take place in August 1995.

12. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that a superficial reading of the report by the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in connection with the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination prompted the general comment that the approach adopted by the United Nations in dealing with problems of racial discrimination - one that had yielded disappointing results to date - tended to be geared primarily to European and Christian values. For instance, only one African country, Swaziland, was referred to in that report. Equal treatment should be given to all continents, regions and countries. That point would certainly be raised in any discussion between the Special Rapporteur and the Committee.

13. The CHAIRMAN said that Mr. Aboul-Nasr's point was well taken and recalled an important statement made by the representative of Saudi Arabia at the time of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, to the effect that the focus in the Universal Declaration was on one set of human values at the expense of other concepts of human values and other cultures. Today, although the United Nations had expanded, it could be observed that some of those concerns were still valid.

14. On the subject of cooperation between the Committee and other bodies and with the Special Rapporteur, he had informed the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee unofficially, at the 5th meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies, of his willingness to address the Commission on Human Rights in order to convey to it the views of the treaty bodies. The point was that the Commission, a governmental body, adopted resolutions on racial discrimination annually, but the Committee had never been given the opportunity to explain to the Commission its views on, and approach to, racial discrimination and efforts to combat contemporary forms of racism, racial

discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. In view of the significant rise in such problems in recent years, such cooperation within the United Nations system was crucial.

15. Mr. FALL (Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights) said that the attention of the Chairman and the members of the Commission on Human Rights would be drawn to the views of the Committee on the general topic of cooperation with the Commission, the human rights treaty bodies and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

16. He was sure that, financial resources permitting, it would be possible to arrange a meeting between the Committee and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. If the fulfilment of the Special Rapporteur's mandate was hampered by financial constraints, which were the cause of the postponement of his visit to the United Kingdom, the choice of European countries for most of his missions so far reflected a priority set in his terms of reference, namely, that a study should be made of contemporary forms of racism and related phenomena in the developed world. The scope of the Special Rapporteur's concern was nevertheless global and universal.

17. Human rights activities in general suffered from a serious shortage of financial resources and it was paradoxical that States calling for the strengthening of those activities were also to be found among those advocating zero growth in the United Nations budget. Some slight improvement in the situation might be expected, however, with the cancellation of all human rights mandates related to South Africa and the redeployment of the funds that became available as a consequence.

18. Appeals for voluntary contributions to the budget for human rights activities continued to be made. That was particularly true in respect of the projected database, where the target figure of US$ 500,000 was far from having been reached. Since taking office, however, he had been able to make a modest, albeit largely symbolic start, on the acquisition of hardware and software appropriate to the needs of the treaty bodies, particularly in the area of communication. It was hoped that non-governmental bodies might be willing to supplement the contributions made by States to that project.

19. There was no report before the Committee on the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People because the Decade was barely two months old. Due account would be taken of Mr. Banton's remarks concerning reporting on the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

20. After describing the missions already carried out or planned by the High Commissioner for Human Rights in different parts of the world to carry on a dialogue with Governments, he offered a number of suggestions which might help to strengthen relations between the Commission on Human Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. First, the Special Rapporteur might, as appropriate, attend the Committee's meetings; secondly, the bureaux of the Committee and of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities might continue to hold joint

meetings; thirdly, persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies might be invited to address the Commission on Human Rights when it debated relevant concerns; and, lastly, periodic meetings - every two or three years, for example - might be held between the chairpersons of the treaty bodies, the special rapporteurs, the bureau of the Sub-Commission and perhaps the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights.

21. The CHAIRMAN thanked the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights for his contribution to the Committee's deliberations and assured him of its continued close and - if possible - enhanced cooperation. Copies of his introductory statement would be distributed to the members of the Committee.

VISIT BY THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO INVESTIGATE THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE TERRITORY OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

22. The CHAIRMAN welcomed Mr. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights for the former Yugoslavia. The visit of a high-ranking official with such knowledge and expertise offered the Committee a unique opportunity for an informed discussion of the ethnically provoked situations which added to the political difficulties of the former Yugoslavia.

23. Mr. MAZOWIECKI (Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights for the Former Yugoslavia), pointing out that the Committee and the mechanism which he represented shared the same basic concerns, said that there was no racial conflict as such in the former Yugoslavia, whose population was composed of Slavic nations - a fact not always recognized where the Muslim inhabitants were concerned. On the other hand, there were many long-standing historical differences, whose origins spanned the period between the Middle Ages and the Second World War and which had been artificially exacerbated in recent times for political rather than ethnic reasons. He also contested the view that there was a religious conflict in the region, notwithstanding the identification of Serbs, Croats and Muslims of different faiths.

24. The most brutal element of the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was the so-called "ethnic cleansing", designed to force minority groups out of areas occupied by a different majority. Initiated by forces loyal to Mr. Karadzic, the practice had later been adopted by Bosnian Croats and - to a lesser extent - by Muslims; despite the conclusion of the Cessation of Hostility Agreements in late December 1994, there had recently been an increase in ethnic cleansing, especially in the vicinity of Prijedor and Banja Luka, areas controlled by Bosnian Serbs.

25. Against that background, he would do his best to answer the questions of the members of the Committee.

26. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that, according to his own knowledge of the region, the conflict in the former Yugoslavia was both ethnic and religious. Although most of the inhabitants of the region were indeed Slavs, the racially different Albanians of Kosovo also had to be taken into account.

27. What was beyond doubt was that the sickness of that part of the world must be most carefully diagnosed before an effective treatment could be applied; that diagnosis involved facing facts; one basic fact, despite the difficulties of accurate categorization inherent in such matters, was that race and religion, as well as politics, were involved.

28. Mr. SHAHI commended the Special Rapporteur's honesty and integrity, especially in describing the threat of extermination faced by the Muslim population as a result of ethnic cleansing.

29. He agreed on the Slavic preponderance in the racial composition of the population in the former Yugoslavia and on the historical causes of conflict between the various nationalities, but considered that the fundamental issue was religious, although it was overlaid by other historically generated differences. In that connection, the profoundly anti-Islamic propaganda disseminated by the Bosnian Serbs bore no small responsibility for the practice of ethnic cleansing. He had appeared on a television programme in Pakistan with Mr. André Fontaine, the liberal and enlightened editor of the French newspaper Le Monde, who had referred to the "legacy of the Crusades", which he himself was inclined to accept as a partial explanation of the persecution and victimization of Bosnian Muslims. The dispute between Croats and Serbs might also be described as part of an ancient quarrel between Christian Churches. Such was the current thinking in many liberal circles in Pakistan, where, as elsewhere, belief in tolerance, pluralism and multiculturalism had been severely shaken by the collapse of the great experiment in integration that had been under way until 1992 in Bosnia, as reflected, for example, in the 30 per cent rate of intermarriages between members of the three communities. Moreover, the repudiation of that experiment boded ill for a great many multicultural and multiracial enterprises in other parts of the global village: the spectre of intolerance based on religion cast a very long shadow and the unchecked pursuit, in the late twentieth century, of political ends through policies that bordered on the genocidal called into question the liberal and cultural values and the primordial sense of natural justice that underpinned all international human rights instruments and jeopardized the very essence of world civilization.

30. He had recently read a statement by the Prime Minister of Sweden, Co-Chairman of the Commission on Global Governance, that the world needed "a humanitarian right to intervene". He himself would argue that all the necessary legal mechanisms had existed to permit the international community to intervene in Yugoslavia. What had been conspicuously lacking was the will to intervene and that was a matter calling for the most serious reflection. Moreover, a correct understanding of the past and present situation in the former Yugoslavia would be important in determining how to deal with similar conflicts that were by no means unlikely to occur elsewhere.

31. Many people in the third world believed that, if the persecuted minority in Bosnia had been of a persuasion other than Muslim, the world would have reacted differently. He himself had been educated in several different Christian schools and formed by Western institutions and had come to accept all the great values and traditions that had crystallized in the West. Now, however, he, and many others like him, were in a state of what he described as "intellectual agony", wondering whether the West itself was still truly

committed to those values. There was also grave concern at the way in which Islamic fundamentalism was increasingly presented in many Western and especially European circles as replacing the now extinct communist threat.

32. In making those comments, he was not taking issue with the Special Rapporteur. He merely wished to draw attention to the new doubts and mental conflicts about the objective of advancing human rights and democracy throughout the world.

33. Mr. WOLFRUM said that the Committee had greatly benefited from the frequent reports of the Special Rapporteur for the former Yugoslavia and would no doubt continue to do so. Nevertheless, he fully endorsed what had just been said by Mr. Aboul-Nasr and Mr. Shahi and could not agree with the Special Rapporteur's contention that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia did not have an ethnic and religious background.

34. The word "racial" as used in the definition of "racial discrimination" contained in article 1 of the Convention might seem to be misleading or too narrow. Differences regarding ethnicity could be of two kinds. In the first kind, a certain group might declare itself to be a minority ethnic group and try to preserve its identity. That situation was not so very dangerous. Danger arose, however, with the second kind, when, rightly or wrongly, a certain group regarded a given minority group as being different. The latter was the group which international human rights instruments endeavoured to protect. The Constitution of the former Yugoslavia had regarded Muslims, Serbs and Croats as being different, so it was difficult to see how the conflict there could be held to have no ethnic background. It could not even be claimed that all the groups involved were Slavs, since the Albanians in Kosovo were substantially different. Moreover, the people themselves looked upon the conflict as being ethnically fuelled and the policy of "ethnic cleansing" would make no sense unless ethnic elements were actually present.

35. Everyone agreed that the conflict in the former Yugoslavia had significant human rights implications. However, there were two reasons for taking great care in analysing its roots. First, while it was the Committee's task to assess the reports submitted by States parties with a view to ascertaining whether they had complied with their obligations under the Convention, it was sometimes stated that, since there were no ethnic differences in a country, there could be no racial discrimination. In the present case, the first step should therefore be to acknowledge that there were ethnic differences, at least in the perception of the population concerned. Secondly, if the Committee did not properly assess the roots and causes of the conflict, it would be very difficult to help to solve or alleviate it. Furthermore, it was a fact, acceptable or not, that international law provided more protection for minorities than for human rights in general and a denial of the ethnic background to a conflict made it less possible to intervene. Whether or not the Committee had a right to intervene in more general terms was not clear, but it had some right to intervene to protect minority ethnic groups, to whom the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs did not apply. The Committee should therefore regard the conflict in the former Yugoslavia as a conflict having ethnic undertones.

36. Mr. RECHETOV said that the Special Rapporteur for the former Yugoslavia, whose reports had been used by the Committee, especially in connection with its goodwill mission to Kosovo, had been correct in affirming that, in order to solve the problems, it was necessary to understand their causes. Mr. Aboul-Nasr and Mr. Wolfrum were confusing causes with effects. It was necessary to understand how Yugoslavia had changed from being a champion of minority rights to what it was today, to understand what it was that had awoken such nationalistic fervour in Yugoslavia and in other parts of the world such as Nagorny Karabakh. Previously, different peoples had lived together in the same village and there had been no division into ethnic groups and no ethnic cleansing. Thus, the causes of the situation were clearly political. In the former Yugoslavia, all political parties, the army and the media had followed the worst possible course, one of total nationalism leading to the commission of terrible crimes. It was significant that, before the secession of Croatia and Slovenia, the President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, foreseeing the terrible events that would follow if Yugoslavia was broken up, had declared himself in favour of maintaining the unity of the country, but, after the secession of Croatia and Slovenia, he had changed his mind, fearing a partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Then the horrors there had begun.

37. Recently, much had been said about the Nürnberg Tribunal and the new tribunal on the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. The latter, however, worked on the basis of a different principle, since the Nürnberg Tribunal had also been concerned with the political situation between the First and Second World Wars which had caused people to become criminals. In any case, the discussion had provided a very useful foundation for the continuation of the work of the Committee, whose members were not so narrowly academic as to exclude the issue from its deliberations.

38. Mr. MAZOWIECKI (Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights for the Former Yugoslavia), replying to the comments made by the members of the Committee, said he recognized that the symptoms of the conflict were directly related to the nationality of the victims and that religious symbols were being used for their selection. However, he wished to draw attention to the real causes of the conflict, since the points of view advocated by some speakers followed the reasoning of those who had initiated it and who, from the very beginning, had denied that a pluralistic inter-ethnic society was possible in Yugoslavia. He saw the situation from a different angle. The conflict had arisen as a result of the dissolution of the communist system. Since it had no longer been possible to maintain the Federal union, the ideas of a Greater Serbia or a Greater Croatia had been born. Those who wanted to remain in political power had started to use historical, ethnic and other arguments in order to preserve their privileged positions. It was paradoxical that one of the leading Serbian nationalists was in fact a Montenegrin. The roots of the problem and the aims of those involved were political, although the symptoms were ethnic. In particular, religious elements were being used. The concept of ethnic cleansing, introduced or substantiated by a famous member of the Serbian Academy, was not only a result of the conflict, but also its objective.

39. He fully agreed with Mr. Shahi about the inadequate response of the international community, to which he was consistently drawing attention in his reports.

40. The Tribunal established at The Hague was obviously different from the Nürnberg Tribunal. The latter had condemned the whole doctrine of nazism and had taken place after the end of a war, whereas the Tribunal at The Hague was meeting while the conflict was still continuing and at a time when those responsible for it were partners in international negotiations.

41. Because of the Committee's mandate, the ethnic aspects of the conflict appeared to be the most serious to its members, but his personal experience had convinced him that, despite all the atrocities that had been committed and all the violations of human rights that had taken place, the inhabitants of the former Yugoslavia still had hopes that peaceful coexistence would be restored. As stated in a recently published book by a girl from Sarajevo, in the past, people had lived together without really knowing who was Muslim, Croat or Serb. Now, however, politics had intervened to change the situation, using ethnic and religious factors as its tools.

42. He would have liked to continue his participation in the discussion, but unfortunately he had to leave immediately.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that it was regrettable that the Special Rapporteur had had to leave so soon. The views the Special Rapporteur had expressed did not seem consistent with his previous reports or with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. He was sorry that it had not been possible for all members of the Committee to speak. He would have spoken himself if there had been time. As a Bulgarian, he was a native of the region in question and he had been surprised to hear the Special Rapporteur's assertion that there were no ethnic conflicts in that region, merely political ones.

44. Mr. YUTZIS said that it was unfortunate that there had not been enough time for members to discuss the issue properly. Perhaps the Special Rapporteur might find the time to come to another meeting of the Committee before the end of the session in order to discuss in more detail his views on the real nature of the Yugoslav conflict. Failing that, the Committee should add the issue to its agenda and discuss it in depth, since it affected the interpretation of the Yugoslav situation and, indeed, of the Convention itself. The Committee had had no opportunity to discuss other important issues with the Special Rapporteur, such as the possibility that United Nations peace-keeping forces might be withdrawn from the former Yugoslavia altogether. He felt that the Committee had not derived the maximum benefit from the Special Rapporteur's visit.

45. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that the Committee could congratulate itself on the high quality of its discussion with the Special Rapporteur, even though the members had not always agreed with one another. The debate had surely made one thing clear: the Yugoslav conflict was influenced by a combination of factors - political, ethnic and others - and it was important for the Committee to acknowledge the political element.

46. Mr. van BOVEN said that, however high the quality of the Committee's debate, the problem remained that it worked very much in isolation and its views were not widely known, while the special rapporteurs had the ear of the highest policy-making bodies in the United Nations. The Committee needed to

make its own views known at the highest level and he suggested that a general debate should be held on ways of achieving that aim.

47. The CHAIRMAN said that it was important to make it clear that the Committee and the other treaty bodies did not always agree with the views expressed by policy-making bodies. That was one of the reasons why he considered that a representative of the Committee should address the Commission on Human Rights.

48. Mr. WOLFRUM said that, although the debate with the Special Rapporteur had been frustrating in a number of ways, the Special Rapporteur had at least acknowledged that the Committee's views were different from his own. The real problem facing the Committee was the one described by Mr. van Boven, namely, how to publicize the Committee's views. After all, the Committee was made up of 18 experts, while a special rapporteur could express his or her views only as an individual. At present, the treaty bodies and the special rapporteurs seemed to operate in parallel, with few exchanges of experiences or views. The problem might usefully be discussed at the next meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and perhaps the representative of the Secretary-General could suggest ways of establishing contact between the Committee and any new special rapporteurs appointed in future.

49. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee must be consistent and forceful so that its views were not only heard, but heeded.

50. Mr. SONG Shuhua said that the Special Rapporteur's visit had done nothing to relieve his own concerns. The Special Rapporteur had attributed the Yugoslav conflict entirely to political factors, and that was surely oversimplifying the problem and discounting the historical background of the situation in Yugoslavia.

51. The Special Rapporteur's visit had also clearly shown that, even though the Committee was a long-established body, its views were still not widely known even within the United Nations system itself. The Committee's current efforts to publicize its views were clearly not working well enough.

52. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee should decide by the end of the session how its debate on the issue should be reflected in its annual report and how it could make its views more clearly known throughout the United Nations system. The bureau would consider the matter and report back to the members.

53. Mr. YUTZIS said that the Committee could make its views clear during its debate on the situation in the former Yugoslavia. He agreed that the Committee needed to hold a general discussion on ways of publicizing its work and opinions: that was a challenge that had to be faced.

54. Mr. BANTON (Rapporteur) suggested that the Committee might express its views on the issue under discussion in the letter of transmittal which would accompany its next report to the General Assembly or in a message to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, both of which were likely to command more public attention than the Committee's ordinary statements. The Committee should make it clear that it disagreed with the

Special Rapporteur's views on the nature of the Yugoslav conflict and then go on to present its own considered conclusions as forcefully as possible.

55. Mrs. KLEIN-BIDMON (Representative of the Secretary-General) replying to Mr. Wolfrum's concerns about increasing the contacts between special rapporteurs and the Committee, said that it might be possible to arrange a meeting with Mr. Glélé-Ahanhanzo, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Unfortunately, Mr. Glélé-Ahanhanzo had already addressed the Commission on Human Rights and had now left Geneva, but it might be possible to arrange a meeting later.

56. Another way of maintaining contacts with special rapporteurs was that adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which had been concerned that the special rapporteurs dealing with the situation in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, respectively, were not paying enough attention to the situation of children in those countries. The Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child had written a letter expressing her concerns to the two special rapporteurs, who had responded positively. The Committee might like to consider such an approach as well.

57. Mr. van BOVEN said that other treaty bodies had adopted innovative methods of maintaining contact with special rapporteurs, which the Committee would do well to consider. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had also initiated an exchange of experiences with non-governmental organizations.

58. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would have the opportunity to make its views clear in its planned meeting with the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. He had also attended a general discussion at a meeting of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in December 1994, on the subject of education and human rights. Such occasions would be a good opportunity for the Committee to publicize its views, and it might even organize a general debate of its own which would be open to other human rights bodies.

59. He suggested that the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance should be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee during the current session, for instance, towards the end of the second week.

60. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.